



## **DES ENVIRONMENTAL DATA QUALITY POLICY**

**(From Section 1.2 of DES Quality Management Plan)**

**BACKGROUND:** The mission of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) is to protect, maintain and enhance environmental quality and public health in New Hampshire. In carrying out its mission, DES relies upon many different types of data that enable it to better evaluate existing environmental conditions, to identify and understand areas of concern, to assign responsibility for these areas, and to promote and enhance credible communication on environmental issues to a wide variety of audiences. The data DES uses must be credible, and the quality of that data must be appropriate for its uses.

Data is used for setting priorities and strategic directions, targeting inspections, measuring compliance, identifying violations, measuring progress and trends, measuring ecological health, and many other purposes. This data is critical because it can affect DES's direction and emphasis, determine whether an enforcement case will be successful, dictate which option will be followed to address a problem, or document a problem or demonstrate progress to the general public and the General Court.

The data DES relies upon must be of known quality, and the quality and quantity of that data must be appropriate for its uses. To accomplish this, everyone at DES must understand how his or her activities affect data quality issues, and all staff must know what they have to do to help produce quality data.

**POLICY STATEMENT:** The Department of Environmental Services will ensure, within its authority, that all of its programs deliver data of known quality to allow all parties to make appropriate decisions about the environment in New Hampshire.

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:** DES's data quality management efforts will follow written plans and guidance, which each program must generate. Copies of this policy will be provided to all staff. The *DES Quality Management Plan (QMP)* provides guidance for all DES programs. Following the QMP, all programs will prepare written standard procedures for sampling, testing, gathering information on field conditions, checking and validating this information, and reviewing their data quality systems. All programs will ensure that the purpose of every data gathering effort is understood by their personnel. DES has assigned a Quality Assurance Manager and a Quality Assurance Team, comprised of representatives of programs throughout DES, to lead these efforts.

All DES programs will have written data quality guidance, in accordance with the DES QMP. All DES programs will review their data quality systems annually, and will report the results of that review, including recommendations and actions for improvements, to the Quality Assurance Manager.

**This policy is subject to revision. It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that they are familiar with the most recent policy.**

**Date Established: June 2001**

**Latest Revision: 2**